

### *Housing*

The prospect is not only for tight rental markets but for waiting lists and doubling up with family and friends. We will thus witness a substantial regression in housing conditions following 35 years of gradual improvements.

Suddenly we see a turnaround. Instead of more units being built to meet the demand, we are facing a regression in the housing sector.

The same CMHC document predicted that we will have a zero per cent vacancy rate by 1983. If the present trend continues, we should approach that by this summer. In the city of Kingston, the vacancy rate dropped from 3.2 per cent in April, 1981, to 0.6 per cent last October. This is a steep decline.

I want to reiterate that this government deliberately ignored the advice of its own officials. The CMHC report stated that the situation of renters will worsen as a result of the short-term rental market prospects. To quote the CMHC report again, referring to the rental situation it states, on page 21, that it is "the most fundamental housing problem today."

Clearly, the government does not see it as being fundamental. But to thousands of renters, Mr. Speaker, this government's inactions may result in homelessness.

The Canadian Council on Social Development shows the devastating impact the housing shortage is having on low income Canadians. In 1979, almost 56 per cent of renters, both families and individuals, had income before taxes of less than \$14,000. Over half of this group had income less than \$5,000.

Rent increases have averaged 8 per cent to 10 per cent in the last two years in most provinces. Recently, there is growing evidence that increases have exceeded these rates by as much as 20 per cent, even in provinces where rent regulation is in effect.

The Canadian Council on Social Development says the budget emphasizes mortgage renewal, even though the rental housing sector is of more serious concern.

To quote the CMHC document again, it reports as follows:

Close to half a million low income renters already pay over 30 per cent of their income for shelter.

These are people in the lowest income bracket in the country—and 500,000 of them pay over 30 per cent of income for shelter!

With predicted rent increases in Toronto of over 12 per cent, the council estimates a single parent in the labour force, with a \$10,000 income, will be paying 40 per cent or more of his or her income for rent by the end of this year. What is going to happen to those people? I would classify these people as being in the most dire straits.

HUDAC predicted on February 16 this year that there will be large rent increases in months to come because a great number of rental projects were built in 1978 under the government's assisted rental program. Half of these had mortgages at 10.5 per cent to 11.75 per cent interest rates and five-year terms. People had something that they could manage, but all

these mortgages will be coming up for renewal this year at rates of about 18 per cent or 19 per cent.

HUDAC estimates that monthly rents in these buildings would have to increase \$200 to \$250 per month per unit to cover the mortgage increases. Such forecasts are cold comfort for those on low and fixed incomes. The simply do not know where they will get the extra money each month to meet the increase in rent.

Foreclosures, and the doubling up of families predicted by the housing minister's own officials, may well provide fertile soil for family breakdown, crime, violence, alcoholism and suicide. With more than a million unemployed Canadians, social unrest and hardship are bound to grow.

The government has failed to see the link between a strong housing sector and a more vital and stable economy. HUDAC estimates that for every 1,000 housing starts, 2,210 jobs are generated for one full year in our economy. For every 1,000 lost housing starts, the national economy loses \$83,500,000 in income. That is what a healthy, viable housing sector means to the economy—more jobs, more income.

Yet, we must recall the words of the finance minister who told his provincial counterparts in Halifax last November, that the unemployed would have to be sacrificed in the short term to bring down inflation over the longer term.

Sir, our criticism of Bill C-89 relates to the government's failure to bring in adequate relief measures commensurate with the severe housing crises and not just band-aids such as this bill provides.

I come back to the second principle that I mentioned earlier of the task force established by the government in 1969. That principle was that every Canadian should be entitled to clean, warm shelter, as a matter of basic human right.

Canada has made great strides since the Second World War in providing shelter for its citizens. But, Sir, this government has lost sight of the principle I just enunciated. The government's own housing officials say there will be "a substantial regression in housing conditions following 35 years of gradual improvement". It will unfortunately be true that the principle that every Canadian should be entitled to clean, warm, shelter as a matter of basic human right, is slowly but surely being put behind us.

Owning a home will perhaps become a reality for only the rich, leaving low and middle-income Canadians to fend for themselves in a period of high interest rates, near zero vacancy rates and spiralling inflation. Their government holds out little hope for assistance.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the warnings about deteriorating housing conditions in the country, the government fiddles while Rome burns. The right of Canadians everywhere to adequate housing fades away, as did Mr. Hellyer and the many former members of the Liberal cabinet who are no longer gracing government benches.